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SOME FEATURES OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY ILLUSTRATED BY THE BOOK OF AMOS.¹

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The Book of Amos commences—after the motto giving its theme, divine judgment²—with the announcement of the guilt and impending punishment of the heathen neighbors of Israel. Damascus and Ammon have been inhuman in their warfare against Gilead.³ The Phœnicians and Philistines have driven a barbarous slave-trade and violated an ancient alliance.⁴ Edom, with unrelenting hatred, follows his brother Judah.⁵ Moab has outraged the most sacred feelings of ancient piety, burning into lime the bones of the king of Edom.⁶ Such are the transgressions of these nations. We notice that they are immoralities; and while they may have been all associated with wrongs done to the people of Jehovah, that is not made prominent here. It is rather the character of their deeds that brings them under divine condemnation. Amos thus opens his prophecy to pave the way for placing Israel under a similar judgment. If the nations who stood in no special relationship to Jehovah were thus to be punished, much more his own chosen people.⁷ Jehovah's regard for a people depended not only on his choice, but also on their moral quality.⁸ Hence Amos proceeds to depict most vividly the immorality of the northern kingdom, in order to bring it under condemnation. The oppression of the poor is mentioned again and again; the selling the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of shoes;⁹ the turning aside the way of the meek;¹⁰ the longing for the new moon and the Sabbath to be gone, that unto the poor might be sold the refuse of wheat.¹¹ There is abominable dishonesty in trade, making the ephah small and the shekel great, dealing falsely with balances of deceit.¹² Justice is perverted.¹³ There is luxurious revelry, with fearful licentiousness and drunkenness, robbery and violence.¹⁴ Amos thus is conspicuous as an ethical preacher, and no minister of God since his day has rebuked with greater severity the crimes of the rich in the oppression of the poor. This, indeed, is characteristic of the work and writing of the prophets. They were ethical preachers. The guilt often most abhorrent to them was the wrong of man to man. Nathan plead the cause of Uriah the Hittite¹⁵ Elijah found the great crime and sin of Ahab in the murder of Naboth. This is given as the ground of the fall of the royal house;¹⁶ not the worship of Baal or the golden calves, but this murder most foul. Hosea's prophecy opens with an announcement of Israel's impending doom because the bloody deeds of Jehu should be avenged:¹⁷ deeds which elsewhere, because acceptable in destroying the house of Ahab, had been commended.¹⁸ Micah also was an ethical preacher, and appears as the special champion of the poor peasantry against lordly grandees.¹⁹ Isaiah spoke in a sim-

¹ A somewhat similar study from the Book of Joel by the writer appeared in **THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT**, Vol. III., Nos. 4 and 5. The endeavor in this article has been to avoid repeating the features of prophecy there illustrated. ² i. 2. ³ i. 3. ⁴ i. 6 and 9. ⁵ i. 11. ⁶ ii. 1. ⁷ iii. 1 seq. ⁸ ix. 7. ⁹ ii. 6. ¹⁰ ii. 7. ¹¹ viii. 5 seq. ¹² v. 12. ¹³ ii. 7 seq., iii. 10, iv. 1, vi. 4 seq. ¹⁴ 2 Sam. xi. 1 seq. ¹⁵ 1 Kgs. xxi. 17 seq. ¹⁶ Hos. i. 4. ¹⁷ 2 Kgs. x. 30. ¹⁸ Mic. ii. 1 seq., iii. 3 seq.

ilar strain and was bitter against great land owners, saying: "Woe unto them that join house to house and lay field to field."¹ He classified great wealth with idolatry.² The condition, too, of his beautiful promise of forgiveness, is that of moral reform.³ Jeremiah took up the cause of bondmen and bondwomen.⁴ This, then, without further illustration, is the spirit of Old Testament prophecy. Its words are marked by far more of the spirit of preaching than of foretelling; they were uttered also often not that the future foretold in them might come to pass, but the opposite, that it might not. Amos said, Prepare to meet thy God.⁵ Seek good and not evil, that ye may live.⁶ Hate the evil and love the good: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.⁷ He had possibly a hope then, certainly a desire, that the impending ruin which he threatened might be averted. His message was no unconditional word of fate: not something which must be fulfilled in detail, but rather which should serve to set forth the principles of God's government in the world. Indeed Amos teaches that threatened destruction might be averted; for in answer to his prayer Jehovah repented, and said of specific judgments, that they should not be.⁸ That this also is the nature of prophecy is taught by the word of Elijah to Ahab,⁹ by the story of Jonah, by the repentance of the people at the preaching of Micah.¹⁰ This is, more over, expressly declared in the word given to Jeremiah: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it, if that nation concerning which I have spoken turn from their evil I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."¹¹

But while prophecy thus may be said to be "never absolute, but always subject to moral conditions,"¹² on the other hand sometimes these very moral conditions are revealed. Thus to Isaiah was given the foreknowledge of Israel's continued obduracy.¹³ The purpose also of God in the choice of his people Israel cannot be thwarted and changed by man's conduct. His compassionate love is higher than his penal justice. His faithfulness can never be broken by man's faithlessness. Hence Amos closes his prophecy with a promise of the future redemption,¹⁴ which is never absent from the prophetic messages concerning Israel. But this redemption is not to come through the restoration of the northern kingdom, the almost exclusive subject of our book, but through that of the house of David. This is significant that in all Hebrew prophecy no hopes of the future ever cluster around Ephraim or any northern dynasty, although the glory and power of Israel were often superior to that of Judah. This fact shows a divine mind controlling the words of the prophets. They are not utterances suggested merely by the circumstances of their times or by the keenest human insight into the future. They are of God.

This divine element, however, does not rule out the human. All that which the wisest foresight, unaided by divine revelation, could give, must be allowed its part in prophecy. Amos was a discerner of his times. The instrument whereby Jehovah was to execute his wrath against Israel and the neighboring people, was not some unknown power beyond the prophet's historical and political horizon, but, as is indicated, one near at hand,¹⁵ beyond Hamath,¹⁶ and hence can only have been Assyria. This kingdom, about 800 B. C. according to the inscriptions,

¹ Isa. v. 22. ² Isa. ii. 7. ³ Isa. i. 16 seq. ⁴ Jer. xxxiv. 8. See also vii. 9. ⁵ iv. 12. ⁶ v. 14. ⁷ v. 15. ⁸ vii. 3, 6. ⁹ 1 Kgs. xxi. 29. ¹⁰ Jer. xxvi. 17 seq. ¹¹ Jer. xviii. 7 and also seq. Comp. Ezek. xviii. 25 seq. ¹² Edersheim's Prophecy and History, p. 152. ¹³ Isa. vi. 9 seq. ¹⁴ ix. 11 seq. ¹⁵ iii. 11. ¹⁶ vi. 14.

received tribute from the northern kingdom; and Jeroboam II., in whose reign Amos prophesied, may only as a vassal of Assyria have been permitted to extend his power so widely as to embrace Damascus.¹ Amos, now, may have been quite a traveler. It is certain that he was no uninformed man. He shows a clear geographical and historical knowledge of all Palestine. It is not impossible that he may have even visited Assyria. He easily at any rate could have learned of its colossal strength and power. Seeing then the weakness through moral corruption, the false security of the northern kingdom, he must have discerned that, unless Israel returned to moral purity and obtained strength in seeking Jehovah, the nation soon would be crushed and overthrown, together with her neighbors, by the advancing empire of the East. Already Assyria's movements were as the roar of a lion about to take its prey. And Amos most likely saw in it the divine instrument of punishment which should not be turned away.² Thus also was it with the other prophets. Though not without divine foresight, a supernatural gift, they are still to be regarded as keen observers and interpreters of their times. They saw what Jehovah was about to accomplish in the movements of the nations, and they sought to shape the conduct of their own people accordingly. They were statesmen, royal counselors, as is especially illustrated in the activity of Isaiah and Jeremiah, who endeavored to direct the foreign policy of Judah.

The Book of Amos illustrates also the relation of the early prophets to the ceremonial law, and the outward forms of religion; for Amos appears as no expounder or mere interpreter of this law and these forms. The people in his day were very religious. They kept the Sabbath, the unscrupulous not dealing on that day.³ They were punctilious about their offerings and sacrifices, their zeal apparently carrying them beyond the requirements of the law.⁴ Yet for all this Amos has not one word of commendation. It may be said that he regarded the worship of the northern kingdom as sinful because not at the central sanctuary at Jerusalem. But this he never intimates, and how could he, when even Samuel and Elijah had sacrificed elsewhere? It is true that the people are bidden not to seek Bethel or Gilgal or Beersheba;⁵ but the alternative is not that of seeking Jerusalem, but to seek Jehovah and live. The kind of seeking also is very plainly indicated. It is not that of sacrificial worship, but of heart and life service; for the word is: "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live, and so the Lord God of hosts will be with you."⁶ And again: "I hate and despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though you offer me burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."⁷ Amos strikes here the burden of the prophetic teaching of the whole Old Testament. It is a constant protest against the separation of religion from morality: "To obey is better than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of rams."⁸ "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."⁹ "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and

¹ Schrader's Cuneiform Inscriptions, Vol. I., p. 208. ² i. 3, 6, 9, 11; ii. 1, 4-6. ³ viii. 5. ⁴ iv. 5.
⁵ v. 5. ⁶ v. 14. ⁷ v. 22 seq. ⁸ i Sam. xv. 22. ⁹ Hos. vi. 6.

to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"¹ "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Cease to do evil: learn to do well: seek judgment: relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."² These are examples of the words of the prophets. They do not necessarily imply the non-existence or the non-recognition of the divine authority of the Levitical law, but may be taken as a warning against its being too exaltedly regarded, and an utterance of the spirit of him who said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone."³

PITHOM.*

NAVILLE AND HIS REVIEWERS.

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Mons. Edouard Naville, in the employ of the Egypt Exploration Fund, went to the Delta of the Nile in the early part of 1883 to begin operations at Tanis-San-Zoan, but owing to the advanced state of the season, he turned his attention to the "Mound of the Statue" (Tell-el-Maskhutah) in the Wadi Timulat, on the old canal from the Nile to the Red Sea. The place had been identified by Lepsius with Raamses, on the basis of a number of monuments found there and subsequently removed to Ismailia, the main one of which represented Ramses II. seated between the solar deities, Ra and Tum. An examination of the texts prepared Mons. Naville for a result at variance with the theory of Lepsius, and he says that he formed the opinion that when the mound should be opened and its contents brought to light, the city would be found to be dedicated to Tum, and not to Ramses. The results of the excavation, not theories, must justify this hypothesis.

What was found is well known. An immense wall surrounded the nucleus of the city. Inside this, occupying the SW. corner, was a ruined temple, dedicated to "Tum, the great god of Theku." Behind it a part of the *naos* was found, which belonged to one of the monuments already in Ismailia. Eleven hieroglyphic inscriptions of greater or less size, and two stones containing a Græco-Latin and a Latin inscription were discovered, and are reproduced in the memoir.

The earliest of the Egyptian remains was from the time of Ramses II., and the latest from Ptolemy II. (Philadelphos), thus covering the ground at intervals between 1500 and 250 B. C. There is a probability that other Pharaohs besides those to be mentioned were active here, though no remains are found to prove it. This has been accounted for by the fact that the stone used for inscriptions was nearly all very soft and unable to stand exposure for a long time. Besides, when

¹ Mic. vi. 6 seq. ² Isa. i. 11 seq. ³ Matt. xxiii. 23.

* THE STORE CITY OF PITHOM AND THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS. By Edouard Naville. London, 1885. First Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Fund.

The Athenæum, London, No. 2994, Mar. 14, 1885; *Andover Review*, vol. IV. (July), 1885.